

Let me tell you, that's quite an accomplishment. As anyone who knows much about it will tell you, farming is hard work. When you consider that this family managed to survive everything from the Great Depression to droughts, floods and grasshoppers over the span of more than a hundred years—while raising a family that has remained across the generations a close knit one—you understand why their's is such a remarkable accomplishment.

The letter goes on:

The farm, while a potent symbol of the pioneer spirit my great-grandparents embodied, is not the greatest legacy they left behind, "Nils" and Inger's great grandchild writes. "Nearly everyone who know me and my family remarks on our closeness and old-fashioned values, characteristics fewer and fewer families seem to share these days. What Nils and Inger gave to their children—to us—was the gift of family. Through bountiful harvests and times of drought, through births, deaths, and marriages, joy and sorrow, the Midgardens have always stood together. Older cousins taught younger ones to swim, uncles pulled wayward nieces and nephews out of snowy ditches, and Sundays brought the family together in worship, meal, and play. Once during a tornado sighting, all the Midgardens in Walsh County drove out to the homestead to stand on the road, as if sheer will power and their bodies alone would protect the place Nils and Inger made home.

Today, Midgardens still live on those family farms, and while not all family members remain on the farm, those who moved away to pursue other livelihoods continue to draw on the basic strength that came from the farm: they remain a close knit family, wherever they are, wherever they go.

Those who moved away contribute to our state, regional and national life in a variety of ways. They became veterinarians, lawyers, advertising executives, architects, doctors, teachers, nurses, and even congressional staffers.

Families like the Midgardens demonstrate the importance of preserving family farmers and the rural communities they make strong, through the generations, the Midgarden family makes clear what those of us who grew up and live in rural areas know so well: family farms produce much more than the food that feeds this nation and much of the world. They also produce strong, solid families.

In closing, I ask that a tribute to the Midgarden family, written by another descendant of Nils and Inger for a family reunion earlier this year, be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows:

OUR LEGACY

The Laurel Wreath of Wheat is the symbol of two souls entwined a symbol of victory and triumph; a symbol of Inger & Nels. The Seedling in the center has seven leaves for seven living children—now gone, but very much alive in us all.

Amund, with his quiet contemplation, peace and vision; Alfred, with his forbearance and stoicism; Dewey, for his sparkle skillfully hidden behind the stolid Midgarden

work ethic; Marion, for her elegance and grace; Gunder, for his mercurial spirit and sense of humor; Joann, for her boundless energy and endless creativity; and Chris—coming around the corners of life on two wheels; radiating a zest for living, affecting us all.

Inger & Nels and their seven children, eventually fourteen, as each found his or her irreplaceable mate: Bessie, Beulah, Clara, Olaf, Florence, Oscar and Evelyn, whose love and courage and enduring presence we are still blessed with on this day.

Fourteen children, seven couples, seven families forming the foundation of this Midgarden Millennium Celebration, counting over 200 family members gathered here today.

We remember the love, the closeness, the pioneer spirit, the dedication of these parents, and their embracing of not only their own—but us all.

Our memories are many and golden . . . oceans of flax fields in spring; the scent of alfalfa in early summer the heading of wheat in July; the way the grain felt on our skin when we rode in the hopper at harvest; haying time and the Tarzan ropes in Gunder's barn; burning fields in August; oiled wood floors of the Fedje store tracing aisles of supplies and stacks of wonder; the excitement of the first day of school in a one room country school house or a little brick school in Hoople.

Rows of potato sacks stretching endlessly on the autumn horizon; anticipation and humor in the air; Lena Olinger holding court in the cookcar; harvest tables and blue tin mugs; excitement when it was our Mom's turn to take lunch to the fields and we could tag along.

Then mercury dipping to unbelievable lows—but our spirits high as the massive snowdrifts; Julebukken and Grandma's Christmas Eve; Uncle Oscar dancing in with potato sacks full of dime store treasures; then months of winter white only to turn once again to Spring.

Seasons of our family—seasons of our lives. Those who stayed here close to this earth, preserving the legacy of this land; and those of us who spread our wings to the four corners now span this wonderful family from coast to coast. Seeking and finding our way; sharing memories with our children and grandchildren; always knowing our roots are here in this blessed place where it all began.

Inger and Nels, their incredible children and the indelible people they found to marry . . . our parents, your grandparents and great grandparents . . . and each and every one of you share in this legacy of love and excellence.

And that is why there is a Laurel Wreath of Wheat with a Seedling in the center. It is our beginnings, our present, our future.

It is the gift that keeps on giving.●

HONORING KATIE KOCH-LAVEEN, MINNESOTA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, the following speech was given recently to honor the Minnesota Teacher of the Year. I believe it is important that my colleagues become aware of Ms. Koch-Laveen's accomplishment, and ask to print in the RECORD my comments to her as she was honored for the information of my fellow Senators.

The speech follows:

OCTOBER 18, 2000 STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROD GRAMS HONORING MINNESOTA TEACHER OF THE YEAR, KATIE KOCH-LAVEEN, AT APPLE VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL, APPLE VALLEY, MINNESOTA

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to honor Ms. Katherine Koch-Laveen as Minnesota's Teacher of the Year for the year 2000. This is certainly a high honor, as I note that 98 Minnesota educators were nominated for this award, and their accomplishments were reviewed by 18 judges. It is all the more impressive considering Minnesota's public schools reputation for academic excellence. I also commend the 98 nominees for this honor, 28 of whom were chosen as "teachers of excellence," and 10 of whom were further chosen for an "honor roll" of teachers. School teachers that excel at their craft are critically important to the intellectual development of their students, and help shape the student's vision for what they can accomplish in their lives.

I still can vividly remember the excellent educators that taught me at Zion Lutheran Christian Day School in Crown. Excellent teachers motivate, show enthusiasm for inquiry, and instill in their students a passion for learning that often continues for a lifetime. A great educator gives the student a core foundation of knowledge about a subject, and a curiosity about the topic that drives a student to study and research more extensively long after they have left that particular class.

Great teachers also make sacrifices for their students. It's no secret that in today's high-tech, knowledge-based economy, Ms. Koch-Laveen could probably find a more financially rewarding profession, especially with her science background. And our great teachers need to be rewarded financially, so that we do not lose too many to industry. But ultimately, I have to believe that what keeps them in the classroom is the intangible reward of seeing their students excel, and having a group of students come in to a class with little knowledge about a topic and have them leave with a firm grasp of core concepts, a desire to learn much more, and an excitement to apply what they have learned in "real world" situations. And I hesitate to use the term "real world," because these days there is probably nothing more real world than a high school classroom.

So congratulations and thank you, Ms. Koch-Laveen, for your commitment to excellence and dedicated service to your students, your community, and to Minnesota. Thanks also to the other hardworking Apple Valley teachers here today that strive for excellence in the classroom and shoulder so much responsibility for Minnesota's future. It has been a pleasure to be here.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of January 6, 1999, the Secretary of the Senate, on October 18, 2000, during the recess of the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives announcing that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills and joint resolution:

S. 1455. An act to enhance protections against fraud in the offering of financial assistance for college education, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2296. An act to amend the Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands to provide